

was being furloughed. But I want you to know, as much as I hate to see these problems, I cannot change a single, solitary decision I would make, because you don't want me to make a bad decision for the long run because of a problem we've got in the short run.

So the time has come to stop playing politics with this. Let's do what our country has always done: Let the Government go on and perform its basic services, and let's get back to work. Every day we miss in these negotiations is a day we're putting off balancing the budget. Let's just go back to work, roll up our sleeves, balance a budget, but do it in a way that protects the fundamental interests of the American people. That's what I'm trying to do.

And I hope by coming here today—and I not only got a very good meal—[laughter]—and had a lot of conversations. Lots of days I just eat lunch alone at my desk. I had much more fun today than I normally do. [Laughter] But I hope we will send a message across this country that this is a good and worthy program. And if the House of Representatives votes to put it back into funding today, we will applaud them and give them a pat on the back. But we want to go all the way. We shouldn't have any of the essential functions of Government shut down.

You know, those young people ought to be able to get loans to start their businesses. Those

folks ought to be able to get permission from the Government to sell our products to foreign countries. We're all buying things from other countries here every day. We ought to be selling our things overseas. And those young families that are having a chance because interest rates are low to move into homes for the first time, they ought to be able to do it. We should not leave this work undone.

So again I say thank you. If you need it, we're going to provide the money to keep the Meals on Wheels program going. And we will be there. But I think what we all want is for our country to stop—stop all this political squabbling in Washington, put all the partisanship aside, and get back to the work of balancing the budget in a way that protects our obligations to our parents and our children and to the future of this country.

We can do this. This is a very great country. This is hardly the biggest problem we ever faced. We can do it, and do it right if we'll do it in the kind of spirit that I have felt in this room today.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:34 p.m. in the Rectory Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Daniel Darko, pastor, St. Monica's Episcopal Church, and Mayor Marion Barry of Washington, DC.

The President's Radio Address *January 6, 1996*

Good morning. Today I want to talk with you about the great debate on the budget. This debate is not just about abstract numbers, and it certainly goes far beyond party politics as usual. It is instead about vital principles and momentous issues for our country. We're addressing profound questions about what kind of country we are and what kind of country we're going to be, about what we owe to each other and what we owe to our children and to America's future. These questions have dominated our politics for quite a long time now. And now it is decision time, time to move beyond arguments and come to conclusions.

For 3 weeks, the Federal Government has been shut down because Republicans in Congress refused to enact legislation to keep it open. This shutdown has had a real and unfortunate impact on the lives of millions of Americans. Now, I'm pleased to report that Congress has acted to bring Government employees back to work and to reopen most services to the public. This sets the stage for constructive, honest, and focused discussions on how to balance the budget while remaining true to our values and true to our future.

America is at a crossroads. One path leads to continual partisan conflict, where nothing is ever really resolved and each decision simply

sets the stage for the next fight. The other path leads to national unity, a unity built on true solutions and real common ground. Down this path lies progress and strength; that has always been the right path for America. So I appeal to the Congress and to Members of both parties to put aside partisanship and work to craft a balanced budget agreement that upholds our values and reflects the common ground the American people have decided upon.

You know, we've been talking about the budget for months. The American people have heard our deeply held views, and we've had time to listen to theirs. I believe there is an overwhelming consensus on a course that is also the right course for America: a balanced budget in 7 years, because it's wrong to leave a legacy of debt to our children; a budget that protects Medicare and Medicaid, because we owe a duty to our parents, to the disabled, and to our poorest children; a balanced budget that protects education and the environment, because we owe a duty to our children and to future generations; and a balanced budget that doesn't single out the hardest pressed working families for higher taxes.

The American people have decided that it is better for people to work than be on welfare, that welfare should be a temporary help, not a way of life, but that the solution should support children and families, not undermine them. Americans have decided they want a smaller Government that is less bureaucratic and more creative, that serves them as well or better with less money, and that there should be a tax cut that promotes educational opportunity and strengthens the ability of families to care for their children.

Now, we can achieve these goals. We can balance the budget while remaining true to

these values. This is a great challenge, but not the greatest one we have faced. It is not the financial numbers that are blocking our progress, it is political ideology. It is time now to do what our parents have done before us, to put the national interests above narrow interests.

Later today, I will be meeting for several hours with the Republican and Democratic leaders of the House and the Senate. Over the past 2 weeks, we have had serious, detailed, constructive discussions about all the issues before us: Medicare, Medicaid, education, the environment, taxes, and spending. I know that if we work together and embrace the possibility for a true national unity, we can reach an agreement to balance the budget that you will be proud of and that will be good for America. And that's what I am determined to do.

This is a moment of great progress and great promise for our country. Many of us hold very strong views about how best to seize that moment. But above all else, now is the time to find common ground, for taking the best that each side has to offer and fashioning a sensible solution. That's the American way. And that is what will get us to the right kind of balanced budget.

This budget debate has been difficult, demanding, and not always pretty. But remember, democracy is raucous and often full of debate that is not always pretty. But our country is still the world's greatest democracy, a beacon of peace and freedom for the world. I ask for the help of every American so that we can build an even greater future for our children.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on Signing the Sixth Continuing Resolution

January 6, 1996

Last night, I signed into law H.R. 1643, the Sixth Continuing Resolution for fiscal 1996, which puts all Federal workers back on the job with pay from December 16 until January 26 and also funds a limited number of Federal activities until September 30, 1996.

This bill is a step in the right direction—but only a step. It does not end the partial shutdown of the Federal Government that continues to seriously impair the activities of the Departments of Commerce, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban De-